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RUEABND/DEA HQS WASHINGTON DC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC
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RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 0061
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RUEHNT/AMEMBASSY TASHKENT
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 TASHKENT 000767

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AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PASS TO AMCONSUL VLADIVOSTOK
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PASS TO AMCONSUL YEKATERINBURG
AMEMBASSY BELGRADE PASS TO AMEMBASSY PODGORICA
AMEMBASSY ATHENS PASS TO AMCONSUL THESSALONIKI

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SUBJECT: UZBEKISTAN: UNODC HOSTS OPERATION TARCET PRECURSOR
INTERDICTION POLICY PLANNING SESSION

CLASSIFIED BY: Timothy P. Buckley, Second Secretary, Department of
State, Political and Economic Section; REASON: 1.4(B), (D)

¶1. (U) Summary: On May 12-13, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) Regional Office in Central Asia hosted a policy planning session in Tashkent in preparation for the second year of Operation TARCET, which is focused on interdicting precursor chemicals en route to Afghanistan. There were many successes during the first year of Operation TARCET, including some of the first precursor seizures in the region in several years, but UNODC officials noted that there also important lessons learned which should help make this year's efforts even more productive. An important ongoing development is the role of the new Joint Protection Committee, a Tehran-based entity involving Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iran, which UNODC hopes can eventually be a "southern cone" counterpart to the Almaty-based Central Asia Regional Information and Coordination Center (CARICC). End summary.

Broad Participation

¶2. (U) UNODC organized a two-day policy planning session in Tashkent as a prelude to the 2009 edition of Operation TARCET, which focuses on interdicting precursor chemicals bound for Afghanistan. Visiting DEA Country Attache and poloff attended, and law enforcement officers and stakeholders from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran, the United Arab Emirates, Korea, Turkey, the United Kingdom, and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) also participated. Each delegation made a presentation of its activities in 2008, including reports of major seizures. Tashkent-based UNODC Regional Director James Callahan cited data indicating that 1,400 metric tons of precursor chemicals are sent to Afghanistan each year and, despite the fact that last year's activities under Operation TARCET led to the first seizures in the neighboring countries since 2001, "the amount seized is only a drop in the ocean." Callahan also referenced U.N. Security Council

resolution 1817 in 2008, which highlighted the importance of such interdiction activities.

A Seizure is a Beginning Point

13. (SBU) Callahan commented that "last year we identified strengths and weaknesses and now we can achieve improved results" during the next round of activities. Another UNODC official noted that participating states should now be turning attention to developing the operational plan and standard operating procedures. UNODC, for its part, will ensure that it properly trains relevant law enforcement agencies in the countries surrounding Afghanistan. Leif Knudsen from the EU's Anti-Fraud Office, reported that efforts to investigate precursor shipments were helped by the Government of Afghanistan's declaration that there are no licit uses of acetic anhydride in Afghanistan. Knudsen reported that there have been successful investigations in the EU, particularly in Germany, to stop illicit shipments of precursors. EU officials carefully analyze declaration forms, and he mentioned that in 2007 there were 260,000 tons of licit chemicals declared. Knudsen told poloff separately that the new EU member states in Eastern Europe have done a good job of contributing to investigations and following up on reports and have often outperformed their peers.

TASHKENT 00000767 002 OF 004

14. (SBU) Knudsen also emphasized a key point of this policy planning event when he stated "a seizure is not the final point of an investigation but rather a starting point." He urged law enforcement counterparts to consider setting up controlled deliveries and initiating backtrack investigations after a seizure to try to identify sources and make additional arrests. This point was restated by UNODC officials several times. Stuart Barton of UNODC's Afghanistan office reported that increased efforts to scrutinize precursor shipments have resulted in price increases in the production process in Afghanistan. For instance, Barton said acetic anhydride is now selling for USD 400 per liter in Afghanistan and that it costs USD 1,456 to manufacture one kilogram of heroin. The profit margin for heroin sold in Afghanistan, per Barton's data, is USD 446 per kilo, which he said is relatively low.

15. (SBU) A Pakistani official commented that his country has been offering to do a controlled delivery with Afghanistan for several years now, but they typically do not receive a response or are told the capability is not developed yet; Pakistan was also unsure where to direct such inquiries. Barton confirmed that the Counternarcotics Police of Afghanistan (CNPA) was the correct entity to coordinate such a request but, he noted frankly, the capability to conduct a controlled delivery is probably still 2-3 years away even though the Afghans have expressed strong interest in doing this.

2009 Activities Will be Intelligence-Driven

16. (SBU) Mark Colhoun, Senior Law Enforcement Advisor at the Tashkent UNODC office, reminded participants that the focus of Operation TARCET will primarily be in the countries surrounding Afghanistan. Colhoun noted that equipment to support the operation is being procured now and will be delivered in time, however, the "southern cone countries" (Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iran) are being affected by funding shortfalls to equip mobile interdiction teams. He remains confident that equipment will ultimately be

procured for their use but just not as early as UNODC had hoped. Colhoun also pointed out that individual national operation plans will be kept confidential in order to protect operational security and integrity.

¶7. (U) Colhoun noted that three areas of training will be provided this year relating to Operation TARCET. The first is basic precursor training, which UNODC will organize on a national level in each participating country. OSCE will support UNODC with this training in Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and possibly Tajikistan. The second type of training will be specialized training, which UNODC will coordinate on the regional level, focusing on equipment for mobile interdiction teams as well as promoting linkages and operational exchange. The third training will focus on advanced techniques for 2-4 personnel from each country, who will form the core of the operational plans. Colhoun said UNODC will look to Paris Pact member states to assist with developing these training opportunities.

¶8. (SBU) Colhoun conceded that some negative feedback from last TASHKENT 00000767 003 OF 004

year was that the 10-week initial phase was too long, especially for static interdiction points since traffickers catch on within hours to where such activities are set up. A major difference from last year is that operations will be more intelligence-driven, which Colhoun said should enable activities to be conducted in a shorter timeframe. Colhoun indicated that last year's standard operating procedures worked pretty well and will not be changed this year; however, he acknowledged that some problems developed because "some implementation by participating entities was lacking." This year UNODC will focus more on stricter observance of standard operating procedures.

New Iran-based Coordinating Entity

¶9. (C) Last year, Colhoun stated, CARICC served as the operational coordinating unit (OCU), although this function was lacking in the southern cone countries. The newly established Joint Protection Committee (JPC), a Tehran-based entity to collaborate efforts of Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iran, will have a coordinating role this year. During a separate conversation, Colhoun told poloff that in theory the JPC will serve a function much like CARICC, but he added that "at this point that is just a pipe dream." There are no liaisons in place yet in Tehran, although modest information exchange has begun. Nonetheless, while there is inherent mistrust between the countries, Colhoun did note that there are no headaches about ratifying the agreement or Russian resentment of U.S. Department of Defense funding that affect CARICC.

UN Also Gets Bugged Down with the Uzbeks

¶10. (C) Privately, Colhoun also told poloff that UNODC also experiences the same sort of access restrictions and communication obstacles with the Government of Uzbekistan that frustrate bilateral missions. Even with regional UN status, he must submit notes verbale to request any official meetings, which are then subject to lengthy consideration. He looks forward to moving on to the UNODC mission in Afghanistan where it is easier to get work done. "They told me that my lack of Russian would have a negative

impact when I started in Tashkent," he sighed, "but in the end it never mattered because I rarely get to meet with any Uzbek officials."

Comment:

¶11. (U) Regional activities such as UNODC's Operation TARCET are an effective way of building connections between law enforcement agencies that might otherwise not have a forum to discuss issues of mutual concern. This event also provided an opportunity for the offshore DEA Country Attache to get into the country and have some meetings (septel). It also helps to change mindsets, as prior to TARCET Uzbekistan most likely focused on interdicting narcotics being shipped north rather than consider raw ingredient chemicals

TASHKENT 00000767 004 OF 004

were being shipped through its territory to the south.
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